



NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN

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Academic integrity: All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

EL7010-8

Dr. Linda Collins

Online Learning for the K-12 Students

Activity #4: Using e-Folios in Education

Comments:

Faculty Use Only

Hi, Michael, I am glad you enjoyed this activity, e-portfolios can be a valuable tool for education and career building. You mention how these should be a collaborative activity between the instructor and the student. Should the instructor play any other roles beyond support and guidance in the development of e-portfolios for a class? Collaborative e-portfolios work well for projects and teams and can also help to build an online learning community. They are also valuable in helping students to understand

collaboration in the workplace. I agree, there are some disadvantages to using e-portfolios including learning how to actively use them, access to the environment, perspectives of both students and teachers, as well as a lack of standard between schools and disciplines. Taking everything into consideration, e-portfolios can add value to the learning experience and go well-beyond when the class has ended. Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins 7 2.9 March 31, 2014

Using e-Folios in Education

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Using e-Folios in Education

The use of electronic portfolios in online classes has risen exceptionally since the rapid growth of global connectivity. E-folios, which they are sometimes referred, provide learners with opportunities to show growth and achievement over time. E-folios provide learners with the ability to keep an organized collection of course work, which increases content knowledge and skills while also increasing proficiency with online learning technology use. The purpose of this paper aims to (a) identify different types of e-folios, (b) discuss various ways e-folios can be used, and (c) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using e-folios in an online learning environment.

Introduction

A portfolio is a careful collection of learner work that has been organized to demonstrate the learner's academic growth, level of achievement, and motivation. A learner's portfolio could include the learner's original work examples, projects, assessment data, and self-reflections of work experiences or course assignments. Electronic portfolios should be a collaborative effort between a learner and instructor; this encourages communication, which increases an understanding of the learning process and required performance expectations. In an online

learning environment portfolios are organized and stored in virtual space, now referred to as electronic portfolios.

Supportive Theoretical Frameworks

E-learning strategies and the use of electronic portfolios align with social constructivist and situated learning theories in that they encourage and promote learners to take an active part in their own learning process (Barrett, 2007; Chai, Woo, & Wang, 2010). At the center of the social constructivist perspective is the belief that knowledge is constructed, in large part, by the learner; the learner takes an active role in the process of learning by exploring, manipulating, and taking charge of their own learning (Brandes & Boskic, 2008; Chitanana, 2012). Additionally, discourse between learner and instructor is also an important component of an online learning experience because it provides the learner with course support and guidance. Similarly, situated learning theory is the belief that learning requires authentic learning experiences, which includes active learner engagement, community building, and collaborative activities (Goel, 2010). Community building and collaborative course engagement are central to the acquisition of learning and, according to both perspectives, for meaningful learning to occur the learner must be presented with opportunities to actively participate in engaging and authentic learning environments (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Wang, 2009). Effective use of electronic portfolios can be achieved in a K-12 online learning environment by understanding the three types of e-portfolios discussed below (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005).

Types of e-Portfolios

According to the IMS Global Learning Consortium, Inc. (2005) there are multiple approaches in which electronic portfolios can be used from assessment portfolios to working portfolios. However, Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005) narrow these approaches down to three types:

learning, teaching, and institutional portfolios. The authors define electronic portfolios as a simple collection or management tool, which can include text-based, graphic, or multimedia work examples stored online or on other supporting technology (p. 2).

Learning e-Folios

A learner's electronic portfolio is defined as a structured online space, which supports the learning process, allowing learners to reflect upon their own learning performance and achievements (Barrett, 2007; Baskin, 2008; Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010). Barrett (2007) explains that learner online portfolios give a learner a perceived sense of control and provide learners with an emotional connection to their online learning experience. Individual learners often reflect when they identify a perceived problem and, incidentally, learner e-folios have an obvious reflective component and may be used to promote efficacy and plan future learning experiences (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Großböck, 2012; Wang, 2009). Thus, e-folios capture learner reflections by documenting the learning process and storing completed work samples.

Electronic portfolios are used to document, guide, and advance learning over time. A benefit to using electronic portfolios in a K-12 online learning environment is that it allows learners to save resources, research materials, and assignments for instructor feedback and later improvements (Luchoomun, McLuckie, & van Wesel, 2010). Eventually, it becomes the learner's very own online portfolio, providing evidence of the progression, consistency, and reflective process the learner has experienced as they move towards course completion. Another benefit to using an e-folio is that it provides professional development planning possibilities because it records the learning process, learner performance, and achievements, which can be used later to guide professional development and future career possibilities (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Großböck, 2012; Wang, 2009).

Collaborative e-folios. Although the concept of managing an electronic portfolio is considered an individual task, research has provided evidence in which the inclusion of social activities fosters collaboration and peer feedback among online learners (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Wang, 2009). The literature reviewed found learners were able to explore additional content and deepen their own content knowledge by working collaboratively using e-folios. Instructors reported that allowing learners to share, review, and collaboratively work on course assignments resulted in further revisions and higher quality learner performance outcomes (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010). Additionally, learners noted that sharing electronic portfolios helped them to formulate their own ideas and reflect on their own quality of work (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Brandes & Boskic, 2008). These findings support claims by Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005), Bolliger and Shepherd (2010), and Großböck (2012) that electronic portfolios involve learners in a reflective and collaborative process that augments learning by promoting skill acquisition and reflection.

Teaching e-Folios

Electronic portfolios for teaching was derived from binders and storage containers used by teachers in traditional learning environments to keep paper based teaching and testing resources. Like learning e-folios, teaching e-folios can serve as documentation of skills and accomplishments for career advancement (Großböck, 2012; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Additionally, the effective use of teaching e-folios exploits the use of multimedia such as video, audio, graphics to provide an authentic representation of teaching and learning (Großböck, 2012; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Using electronic portfolios in the K-12 online learning environment is a great advantage because it provides a unique and often a safe place to create, manage, and store teaching and learning resources.

Instructors sometimes create e-folios as a way to introduce themselves to online learners and provide potential learners with course expectations and assignment examples (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Teachers are often exposed to high-pressure situations, such as with student achievement expectations. These student performance expectations greatly depend on student retention of the content but often reflect more professionally on the teacher rather than the student. Therefore, teachers should reflect often on their teaching practices and pedagogy and, as with learning portfolios, teaching e-folios also have a reflective component, which can be used to address this reflective need (Groißböck, 2012).

Additionally, teaching e-folios can serve as a way for administrators to coach new or struggling teachers. Teachers want to be coached by administrators who have a complete view of their teacher created materials and resources (Groißböck, 2012). E-folios provide teachers with a way to compile, organize, and reflect on teaching methods not afforded to other teachers. Electronic portfolios for teaching, serve as a tool that helps teachers reach a deeper understanding of their development and teaching progress through self-reflection (Brandes & Boskic, 2008; Groißböck, 2012). By using e-folios teachers, can use their self-reflections and feedback provided by administrators to improve teaching practices.

Institutional e-Folios

Institutional electronic portfolios incorporate a mix of teaching and learning products as well as materials and resources from other programs and departments (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). These e-folios are relatively new according to Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005) citing that the Urban Universities Portfolio Project was the first formal initiative towards this endeavor. In addition to holding learners accountable, e-folios also provide a way for federal and state agencies, employed to ensure educational institutions adhere to high quality teaching, a way to

generate and document the quality of teaching and learning (Baskin, 2008). E-folios deliver creative ways to showcase faculty and student achievements, teaching and learning, as well as highlight important K-12 online institutional information (Baskin, 2008). They are essentially perfectly preserved vessels and assessments of artifacts that demonstrate the professional competencies and student learning achieved in online learning programs (Barrett, 2007; Luchoomun, McLuckie, & van Wesel, 2010).

Disadvantages of e-Folios

In addition to the advantages discussed above, there are a few disadvantages that should be addressed. Just as with online learning, the nature of developing and maintaining an e-folio, according to Tosun and Baris (2011), depends on the student's motivation and may not be suited for all types of learning styles. Accessing an e-folio through the web can also be costly and unreliable due to the inconsistency and reliability of most Internet networks (Wilhelm et al., 2006). Additionally, creating and maintaining an e-folio requires a certain level of technological skill and time (Tosun & Baris, 2011; Wilhelm et al., 2006). Another disadvantage is that personal and professional information is freely online for the world to access. Maintaining an e-folio for teaching and learning means accepting the possible risks and weighing the advantages with the disadvantages.

According to Wilhelm et al. (2006) one of the biggest disadvantages to institutional electronic portfolios is the lack of normalization between universities and other schooling programs stating, "Successful implementation of e-portfolios involves a shared vision among faculty, students and administration" (p. 63). Furthermore, the concern with e-folios extends student assessments and the lack of standardization when using e-folios to assess student learning, growth over time, and scoring (Shavelson & Klein, 2009). Finally, educational

institutions using e-folios to demonstrate accountable teaching and learning must consider the potential privacy and bias concerns related to using electronic portfolios. An online portfolio may include personal information about teachers and students identifying their gender, race, and ethnicity, which could violate certain federal, state, or university laws. Additionally, the personal information found in e-folios could potentially foster bias decision or assessments by those who have access (Shavelson & Klein, 2009).

My Perspective

The theory and methodology behind the use of electronic portfolios are sound and valuable. A learner's gained knowledge, content skills, and program goals can be enhanced through the use of collaborative and institutional applications when used to create, organize, and maintain evidence of achievements and accomplishments. Electronic portfolios definitely have a place in the K-12 online classroom environment for both learner and instructor. A blended approach combining the use of many online applications, tools, and resources is no doubt the best means of creating an effective, engaging community of online learners.

Conclusion

The benefits of electronic portfolios have been identified by educational institutions from around the world and are being used today to facilitate and support lifelong learning. Using e-folios provides educational institutions the means to hold learners accountable to course or program objectives with effective and constructive supervision (Basken, 2008; Wang, 2009). Additionally, electronic portfolios allow learners to reflect and assess their own work and learning process. Organizing and maintaining an e-folio encourages meaningful learning, and a way to document personal and professionally related work achievements and skills for potential careers, professional developments, and job seeking endeavors (Basken, 2008; Bolliger &

Shepherd, 2011; Wang, 2009). Finally, the use of collaborative online portfolios builds a sense of online community by increasing collaboration and discussion, and encouraging new knowledge (Brandes & Boskic, 2008; Wang, 2009).

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